



C.B.R.C. TORCH  
A PUBLICATION OF THE  
CENTRAL BLIND REHABILITATION CENTER  
EDWARD HINES JR. VA HOSPITAL

Special Edition- 2012 Staff Updates



*"Let it light the pathways of the blind, that their dignity may be restored."*

## Table of Contents

Accessibility options have been implemented to enable our visually impaired readers ease and greater access to articles that are of interest to them. If e-readers float the cursor over the list of articles and use the commands “control and click” they will be launched to the article of interest they select without having to scroll through each article.

Mission Statement.....	2
Table of Contents.....	2
Chief’s Message.....	3
New Faces.....	4
Bitter-Sweet Farewell.....	5
Sad Departures.....	7

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Blind Rehabilitation Center is to provide high quality blind rehabilitation service through the provision of a broad range of programs. We are a CARF Accredited Program.

Contents are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government or Department of Veterans Affairs. Links may take you outside of the Department of VA web-site. VA does not endorse nor is responsible for the content of the linked websites. Links will open in a new window.

Produced By:

## The Torch is a Publication of the Central Blind Rehabilitation Center

And Minuteman Press-  
Hickory Hills, IL

## Comments or Subscriptions

**Please Contact:**

**C.B.R.C. Torch**

**PO Box 5000 (124)**

**Hines, IL 60141-5000**

**(708) 202-2273**

<http://www.hines.va.gov/services/blind/index.asp>

## Chief's Message

*"Some changes look negative on the surface but you will soon realize that space is being created in your life for something new to emerge."- Eckhart Tolle*

This special issue of the CBRC TORCH was produced to acknowledge the many staffing changes that occurred this past year 2012. Changes this year ranged from good, to bitter-sweet, and even sad. We recognize the blind center is more than a program and a building, it is 'people.' People we work with, support, laugh with, cry with, and debate with. Some individuals come into our lives for a short time, while others linger for years. Both can leave lasting memories. Our Center Hallway on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Blind Rehabilitation Center communicates staff contributions on a daily basis. Displayed here one finds a long history of staff who have dedicated 25 years or more of Service to government, Hines VA Hospital, and often the Blind Rehabilitation Center. It is called our 'Years of Service Wall.' Many of these individuals have also since, retired, moved on to other life-long pursuits or passed away. It is here that we are reminded that the blind center continues to move forward with the contributions by all of these individuals every day, every year.

Whether you are a former staff member, colleague, retiree, patient or friend of the Blind Center, we wanted to share with you these changes and offer our best wishes or condolences on the events of this year that have shaped the future that lays ahead of us.

Jerry Schutter

*"This is a new year, a new beginning, and things will change."  
-Taylor Swift*

## New Faces

A number of new faces have emerged at the Blind Center this year. We welcome these new staff with friendship and camaraderie.



*"Destiny is not a matter of change; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved."*

*-William Jennings Bryan*

### **Laurie Schmitt, Ph.D.**

With Dr. Paul Fedirka's retirement, the Blind Center multidisciplinary team was missing our team Psychologist. As mentioned in the 2012 Fall Issue of the TORCH, Dr. Schmitt comes to us from Hines VA Spinal Cord Injury Unit. She offers 20 years in the mental health field and is a welcome addition to our team BRC.

### **Karen Kwapis, NP**

Our medical team also experienced a vacancy after Mary McKinstry's retirement in May 2012. Karen Kwapis, NP, joined our team from the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation unit here at Hines, and is very familiar with Adult and Geriatric medicine in Rehabilitation. She brings a wealth of experience to our unit, we are happy to have her.

### **Linda Kolendowicz, R.N.**

Our night shift nursing crew has changed significantly. Filling in behind Chris DiPompeo, LPN, who retired December 2011, is Linda Kolendowicz, RN who comes to us from Hines Medical Intensive Care Unit. Linda has been with Hines Nursing for approximately 12 years.

### **Yvette Johnson-Ingram, LPN**

One more addition to our night shift nursing crew is joining the team, coming from Hines Spinal Cord Long Term Residential Care Facility. Yvette should be on schedule sometime after the holidays. Our night shift nursing crew now consists of Lenoire Nealy, LPN, and Linda Kolendowicz, RN, and Yvette. Welcome!

## Bitter-Sweet Farewells



*"One day your life will flash before your eyes. Make sure it's worth watching." -Unknown*

## Technical Career Field (TCF)

### Interns

The Blind Rehabilitation Technical Career Field internship program has come to a close. From August of 2007 to August 2012, the Blind Center hosted 22 interns from all over the United States for 2 year terms under the TCF Internship Program. These individuals brought a renewed attitude toward Blind Rehabilitation to the Center.

The following is a list of TCF Student Interns who passed through the Hines BRC portal sometime in the last 5 years. Some were able to find employment here at Hines, while others moved on to other Blind Centers and still others on to other life pursuits. We wish them luck in their future endeavors and hope our paths will cross again.

## Hines Placements

Kevin Kistner  
Kristen Reinhart  
Amanda Widmer  
Richard Shuck  
Laura Luckow  
Keely Moran  
Francis Evovo  
Emily Bajalis

## Placed at Sister BRC's

Peter Heavern  
Lisabeth Causey  
Cori Rasmussen  
Liam Whitney  
Elizabeth Wagner  
Ana Williams  
Tara Wilhelmus  
Christine Yamashige  
Deborah Shook  
Nicole James

## ....On to Other Pursuits

Jenny Luttrell  
Lindsey Crunkleton  
Jenny Doan  
Christopher Kreider

*"You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take." -Wayne Gretzky*

**Chris DiPompeo, LPN**

As mentioned in the Winter issue 2012, our night crew nurse Chris Di Pompeo retired in December 2011 after 32 years of Service at Hines VA Hospital. We sent Chris off to retirement with a Tea and Dinner back in January 2012. Chris reports that even in retirement she is busier than ever, spending time with her mother and traveling with friends.



**Paul Fedirka, Ph.D.**

July 2012 we celebrated with Dr. Fedirka on his retirement from government service. We celebrated this milestone with a Tea and Dinner where we reminisced Paul's career at the Blind Center. Now Paul is spending his time traveling with his family and playing way too much golf.



**Mary McKinstry, NP**

Retiring May 2012, Mary McKinstry, NP, departs after 6 years at the Blind Center, and 45 years to the Nursing field. She continues to enjoy outdoor recreation with her new husband and has been active in cycling with our Veterans on several occasions.



**Todd Preusker, COMS**

Originally coming to Hines as a Blind Rehabilitation Intern from Northern Illinois University affiliate Blind Rehabilitation program in 2010, then after a 1 year Polytrauma TBI Fellowship and temporary appointment in the Visual Skills area, 2 ½ years later, Todd Preusker accepted a position in Orientation & Mobility, private Services, Milwaukee, WI. We wish him luck.



**Debbie Huml, RN**

Also in May 2012, we bid farewell to another nurse, Debbie Huml, who retired after 35 years in Nursing Service with the Army reserves. Twenty four of those years with the Blind Center. She is enjoying retirement with her family.



## Sad Departures

It was with heavy hearts that we experienced the loss of two staff members over the summer 2012.

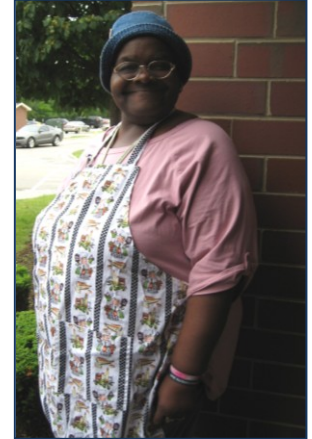
Computer Access Technology Instructor, **Richard Shuck**, passed away suddenly this summer.

Richard first came to the Blind Center as a patient, then a TCF Intern, and then was selected for a CATs area vacancy. Richard was the very example of what we strive to accomplish at the Blind Center every day. As a blinded Veteran he came to us for assistance, completed the program, returned to school and gained meaningful employment through his efforts and our assistance.



## Valerie Allen-Mitchell, LPN

Long time night shift nurse Val, will be sorely missed, after passing away suddenly this past September. She devoted 30 years to Hines VA Hospital and served the patients, her colleagues and friends well. Val's special personality will be missed by patients and staff alike.



We celebrated the lives of these two Blind Center staff members with memorial services in the Hines Chapel, where patients and colleagues expressed their thoughts and memories of these two fine individuals whose lives touched ours in so many ways. Our condolences are offered to all who knew them.

*"Certain things, they should stay the way they are. You ought to be able to stick them in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone."*

*-J.D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye*



**C.B.R.C. TORCH**



Building 113 (124)  
Hines V.A. Hospital  
Hines, Illinois 60141-9999

**FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND  
& PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED  
POSTAL MANUAL PART 135**